

Closing Achievement Gaps for Students

Presentation by Dr. Douglas Reisig and Ms. Jonna Brandt (Hellgate Elementary) and Ms. Liz Cunningham, (T.E.S.T.) for the Montana Office of Public Instruction “Assessment Toolkit Conference” April 23, 2007

Federal Bipartisan Support for NCLB

NCLB passed 381 – 41 in the House

NCLB passed 87 – 10 in the Senate

Important...

95.2% of Democrats voted for NCLB passage

86.3% of Republicans voted for NCLB passage

**Adjustment Possible with the 2007
re-authorization of NCLB??**

NCLB – A major shift in addressing...

Participation - Student

Data - Student

Achievement Targets – Student & School District

Achievement – Student Disaggregation Groups



Why Achievement Gaps Occur...

Lack of family stability or support for student academic effort and/or success

Weak or inappropriate curricula

Ineffective instruction and assessment

Disengaging classroom discourse

Poor student self-concept

Unsuccessful adjustment to school culture

Ineffective/Destructive School Characteristics and Practices...

Cultural alienation

Ineffective classroom strategies and assessment

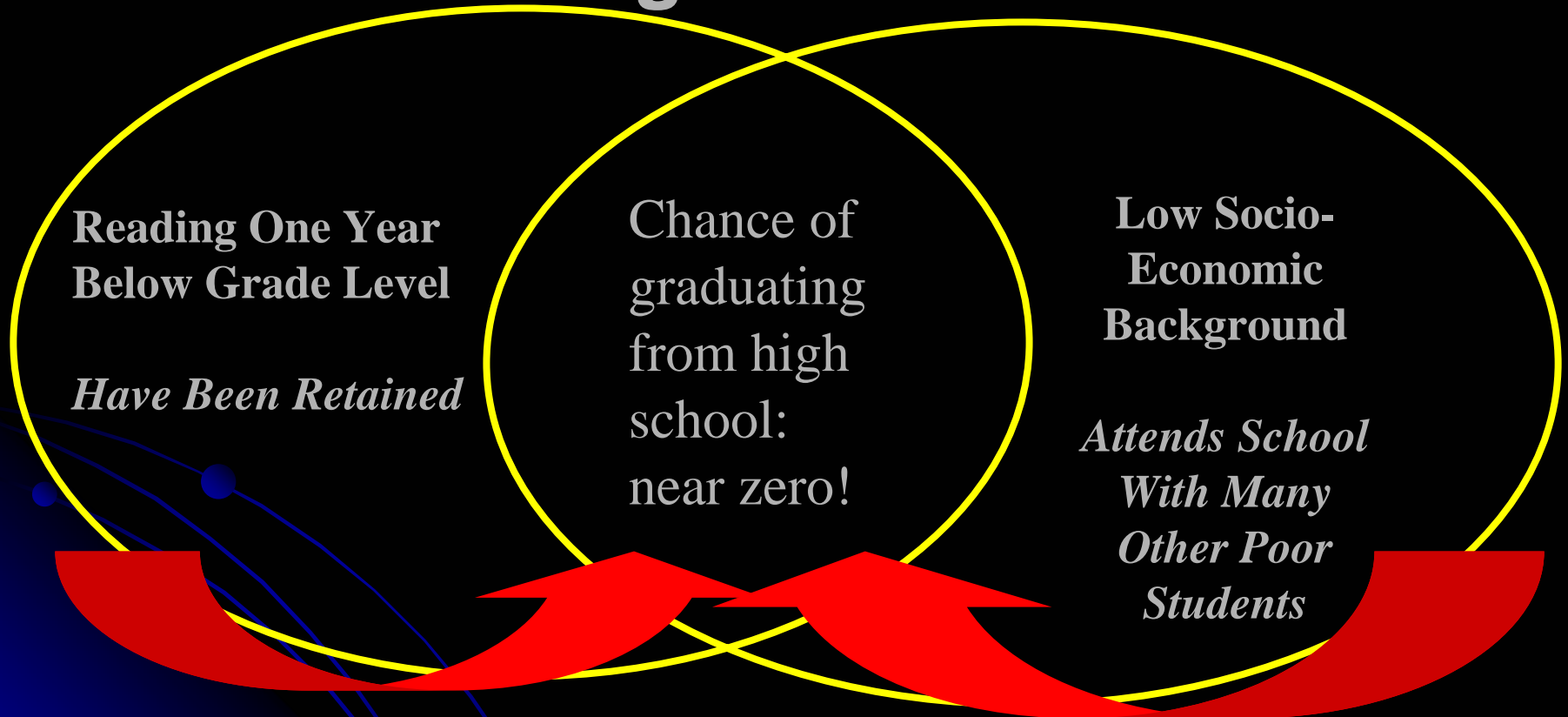
Inexperienced or inadequately prepared teachers

Low standards and/or expectations

Weak curriculum

Poor quality assignments and/or instructional materials

If all conditions present, a child has virtually no chance of graduating from high school!



*

** In Montana, 33.7% of all students qualify for free and reduced lunch.

(National Center for Education Statistics, 2005)

Consider...

If a student is struggling with reading at the end of 1st grade, he or she will have only a 1 in 8 chance of catching up to grade level without extraordinary and costly interventions.

Value of Mathematics...

“...mathematical literacy is as important as proficiency in reading and writing. Mathematics is so entwined with today’s way of life that we cannot fully comprehend the information that surrounds us without a basic understanding of mathematical ideas. Confidence and competence in mathematics can lead to productive participation in today’s complex information society and open the door to opportunity.”

Closing the Achievement Gap...

“To increase the achievement levels of minority and low income students, we need to focus on what really matters: *high standards, a challenging curriculum, and good teachers*”

Kati Haycock. “Closing the Achievement Gap” Educational Leadership, ASCD. 2001



Closing the Achievement Gap...

Standards are key

All students must have a challenging curriculum

Some students require more time and more instruction

Teachers matter a great deal

Closing Achievement Gaps for Students

How will we do it....

Based on information from Dr. William H. Parrett and Dr. Robert Barr
Center for School Improvement & Policy Studies, Boise State University

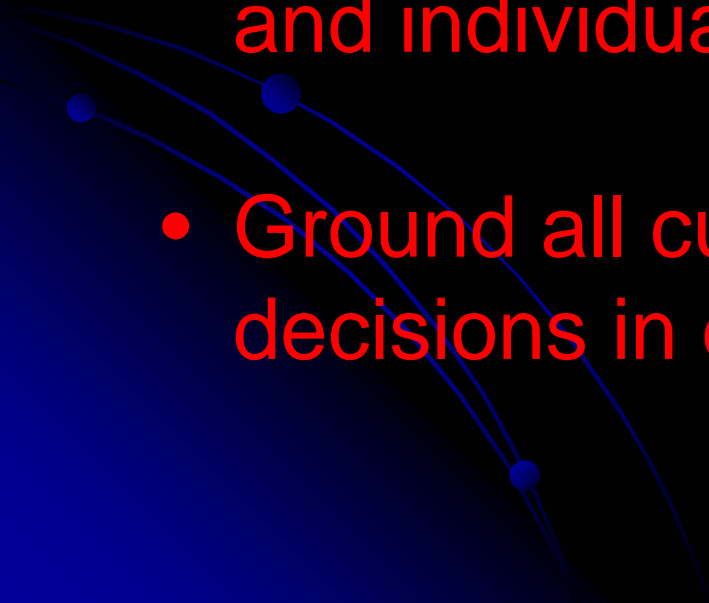
First...

Implement high performance programs...

- Select results-based programs for reading and mathematics
- Align to state standards and use multiple assessments
- Embed teacher support on the job - mentoring


Second...

Use the data...

- Establish academic achievement goals set at the district, building, grade, classroom, and individual student levels
 - Ground all curriculum and instructional decisions in data and analysis of data
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Third...

Provide professional learning opportunities...

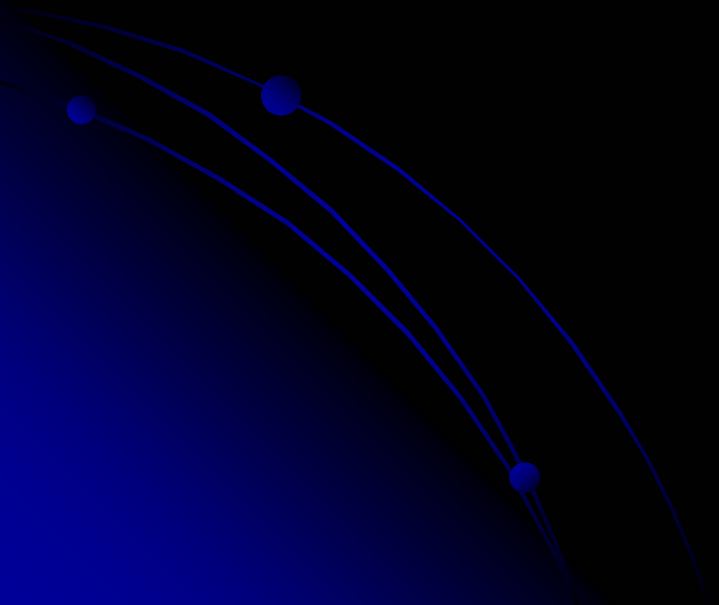
- Collaborate in grade level learning teams
 - Enhance instruction methodology
 - Offer assessment literacy for staff personnel
- 

Fourth...

Extend learning opportunities for students...

- Ensure all students *will* learn
- Provide extended-day programs, where possible
- Provide summer school/cultural camps, where possible

Did you know...




Schools fail low performing students when they ...

- Hold low expectations for student achievement
- Assign at-risk students to inexperienced teachers, without offering support
- Inadequately teach reading / math basic skills
- Track / misassign children to special education
- Blame student's families
- Employ a “Bell Curve” mentality

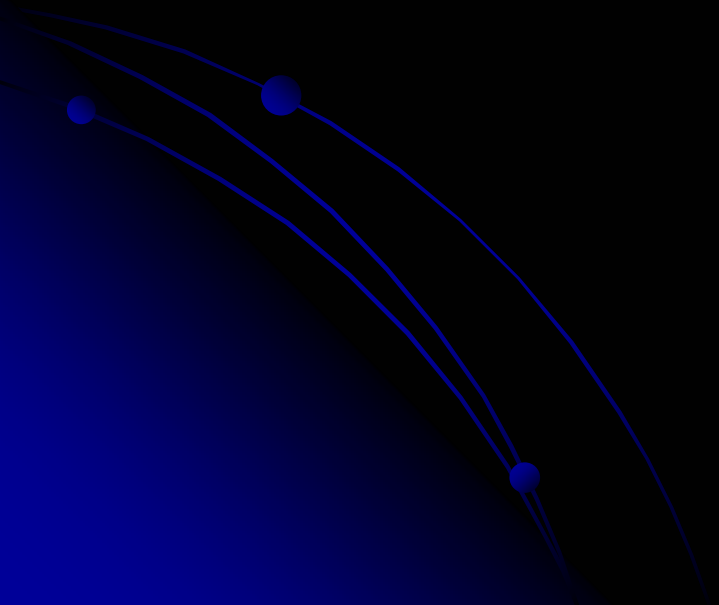
What adults say when rationalizing low performing student failure....

- They're slow, they can't learn
- They're poor (economically disadvantaged)
- Their parents don't care
- They come to schools without breakfast
- Not enough supplies, not enough equipment, not enough specialists

Increasing achievement for low performing students, involves...

- Creating a culture of data and assessment
 - Instituting instructional improvements / capacity
 - Reorganizing time & space
 - Engaging parents, support effective teaching
- 

What to do...



Keys to increasing achievement for low performing students...

Ensure effective district and school leadership

Hold high expectations for all students

Target low-performing students/schools...start with reading and mathematics

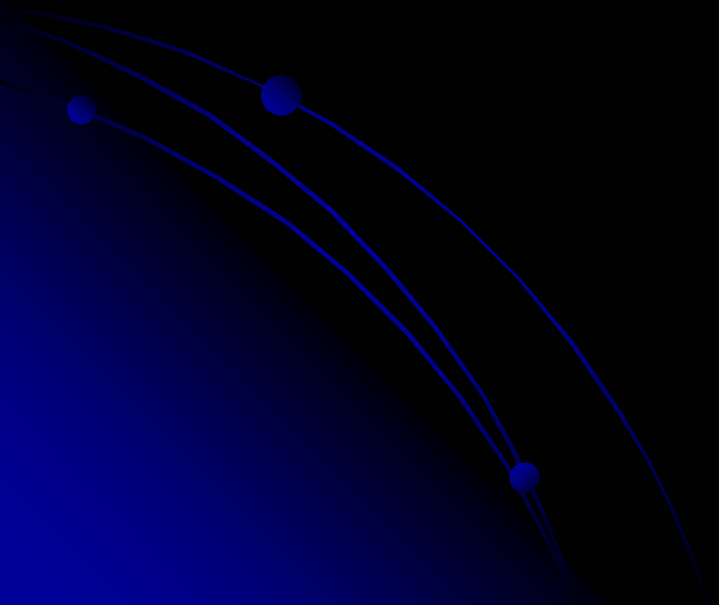
- Align/manage/monitor/assess the curriculum

- Create a culture of data and assessment literacy

- Build and sustain instructional capacity

First...

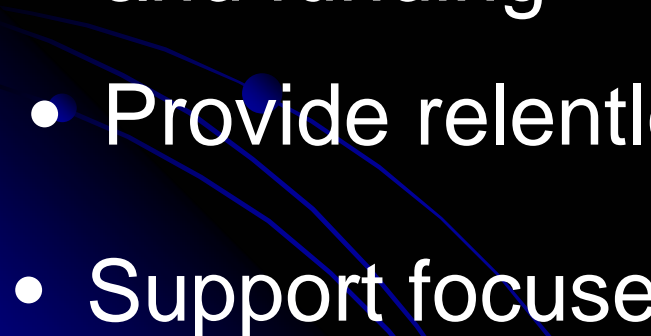
**Ensure Effective School
and District Leadership**



Essential Leadership Skills - we must...

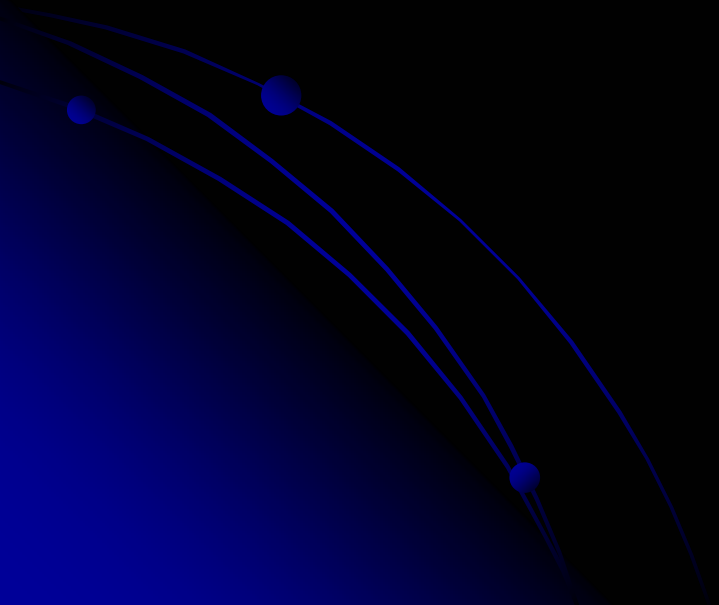
- Demonstrate moral and political will to do the right thing by children
- Acknowledge poor performance / seek solutions
- Promote a vision of high achievement for all students
- Establish measurable goals / monitor progress

Essential Leadership Skills – we must...

- Exercise accountability and promote data proven instructional methodology
 - Target student needs to prioritize resources and funding
 - Provide relentless support for teachers
 - Support focused professional development
- 

Second...

**Hold High Expectations
for Children**



High Expectations for Children – we must...

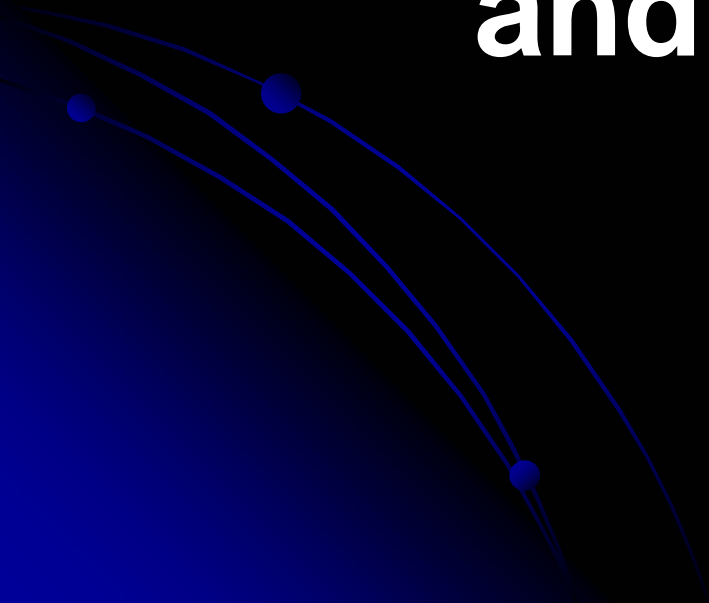
- Acknowledge students' growth wherever they may start
- Make the classroom comfortable / welcoming
- Be approachable: Remember if your students learn your subject, it's your responsibility
- Know not everyone is the same – don't assume everyone shares the same middle class experience

High Expectations for Children – we must...

- Use policies to serve people, not to punish and exclude
- Understand that without meaningful help, students will not get an education
- Don't overfill classrooms – give teachers opportunities to connect with students

Third...

**Target Low-Performing
Students... Start With Reading
and Mathematics**



In Reading and Mathematics, Schools must ensure that...

- Interpreting and using data for instructional decision-making *is mandatory*
- Building teacher knowledge and skills *is mandatory*
- Aligning curriculum to standards and targeting instruction to those standards *is mandatory*
- Targeting interventions on low performing students *is mandatory*

Fourth...

**Align, Manage, and
Monitor the Curriculum,
Instruction, and Assessment**



Curriculum: The way it *used* to be...

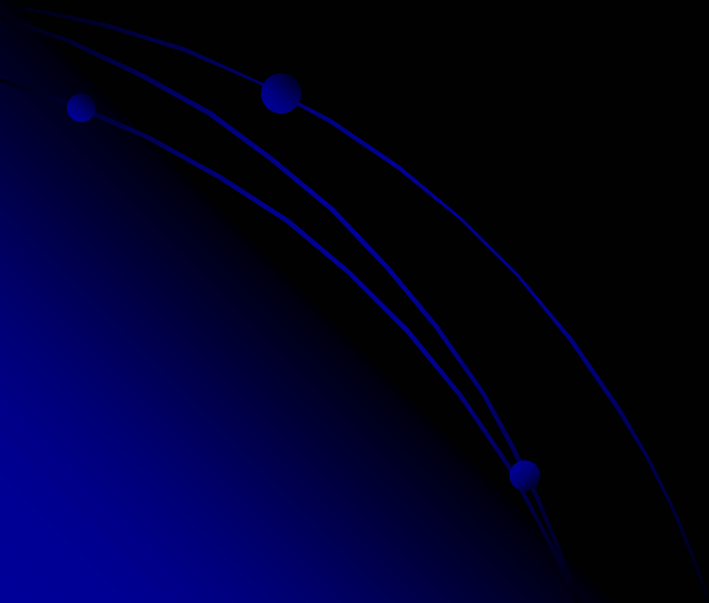
- Teacher interest / prerogative
- Textbooks/curriculum guides “drive” curriculum
- Little consistency between teachers
- No consensus regarding what is taught
- Students tracked into different curricula
- Absence of monitoring / management

Curriculum: The way it *can be* today...

- Uniform and rigorous curriculum aligned to Montana standards
- Prescribed instruction for all students - 70% prescribed, 30% flexible
- Consensus on what is taught and when taught
- Model lessons developed for all teachers
- Planned horizontally Pre K-8, all subjects, and vertically (back mapping / benchmarking) - *“Power Standards Process”* possibilities

Fifth...

**Create a Culture of Data and
Assessment Literacy**



Data & Assessment: The way it *used* to be...

- Inconsistent use of data – little understanding
- Assessments vary from teacher to teacher
- District assessment: standardized tests (basic skills, aptitude, achievement) not aligned with curriculum
- District assessments only report average scores
- Publisher / teacher developed, instructional assessments

Data & Assessment: The way it *can* *be* today...

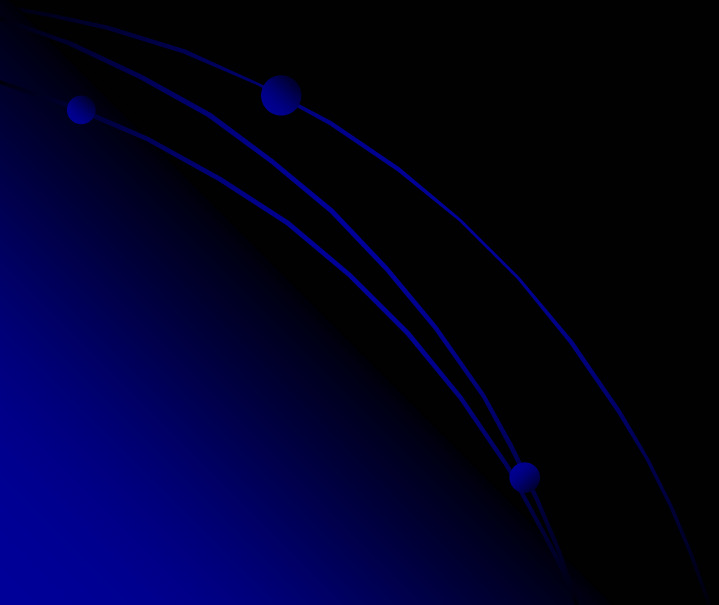
- State required tests – elementary/middle school
- Performance assessments used for district, school, and classroom accountability
- State assessments aligned with state standards and local school district curriculum
- Assessment data disaggregated: SES, Ethnicity, Special Needs, LEP, etc.

Data & Assessment: The way it *can* *be* today...

- Assessments track progress toward individual, grade level, and school goals
- Teachers develop weekly, monthly benchmark
- Align assessments with clear instructional targets
- Assessment literacy learning teams developed

Sixth...

Build and Sustain Instructional Capacity



Students and Teachers Learn...

10% of what they *read*

20% of what they *hear*

30% of what they *see*

50% of what they *see and hear*

70% of what they *discuss together*

80% of what they *experience personally*

95% of what they *teach to someone*

Elson Ekwall, RX Reading Program, 1971

Instruction: The way it *used* to be...

- Low expectations for many students
- Teacher as "Free Agent," "Close the door"
- Teachers "broadcast" whole class instruction
- Teachers move sequentially through course with little to no re-teaching time
- Some students fail, fall further behind, achievement gap increases
- Academic remediation as pull-out programs

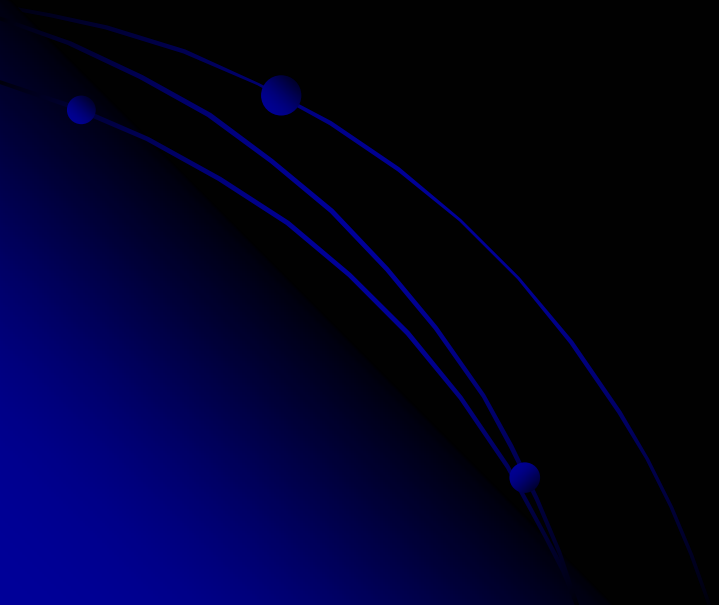
Instruction: The way it *can be* today...

- Staff rigorously follow prescribed curriculum
- Teach short, prescribed units (benchmarks)
- Use pacing guides/use research-based strategies
- Teachers share model lessons / lesson study
- Teachers collaborate weekly to bi-weekly - (horizontally / vertically)
- Frequent assessments / benchmark assessments to identify who learned, who didn't

Instruction: The way it *can be* today...

- Following each unit: Assess, Enrichment, Review, Re-teach (if necessary)
- Increased focus on most needy students
- Differentiated instruction
- Short-term, flexible grouping
- Frequent parent / student contact
- Goal of mastery learning
- Rigor, relevance, relationships in learning

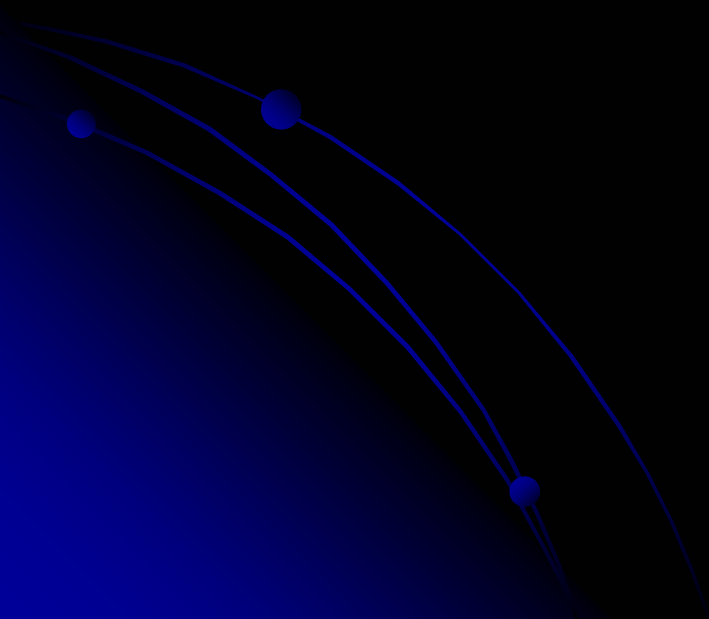
How To Improve...



Element 1...

High Performing Schools and Districts Make No Excuses. Everybody Takes Responsibility for Student Learning.

Ed Trust, 2005



Element 2...

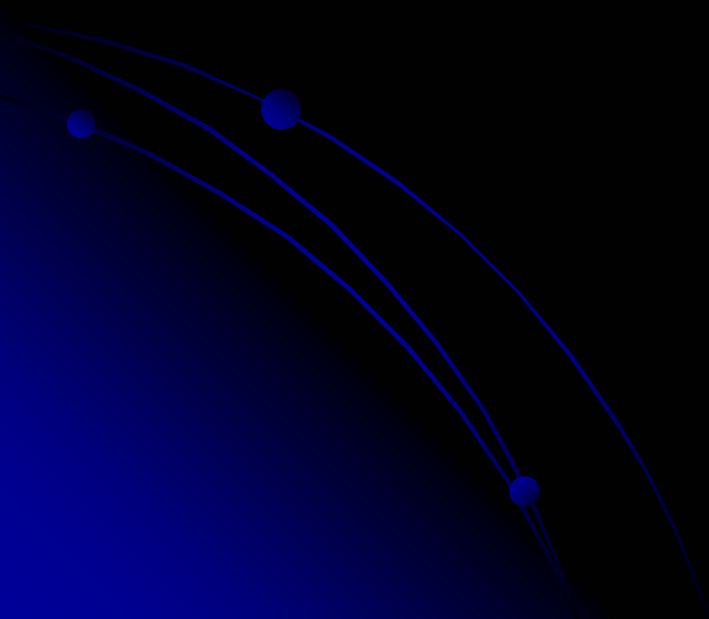
High Performing Schools and Districts Do Not Leave Anything About Teaching and Learning to Chance. ***Teaching is not a Mystical Event – it is Based on Effective Professional Practice Standards.***

Ed Trust, 2005

Element 3...

High Performing Schools and Districts Insist on Academic Rigor All the Way Up the Line

Ed Trust, 2005



Element 4...

High Performing Schools and Districts **KNOW**
That Good Teachers Matter More Than Anything
Else

Ed Trust, 2005



High performing districts know...

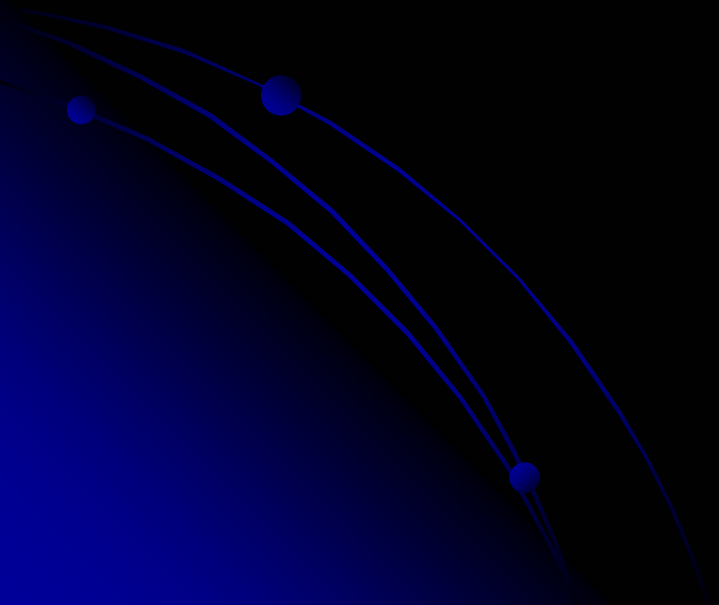
- They need to have clear and specific goals for what students should learn in every grade, including the order in which they should learn it
- They need to provide teachers with common curriculum, assignments
- They need to assess students every 4-8 weeks to measure progress
- They need to act, immediately, on the results of those assessments.

High performing districts know...

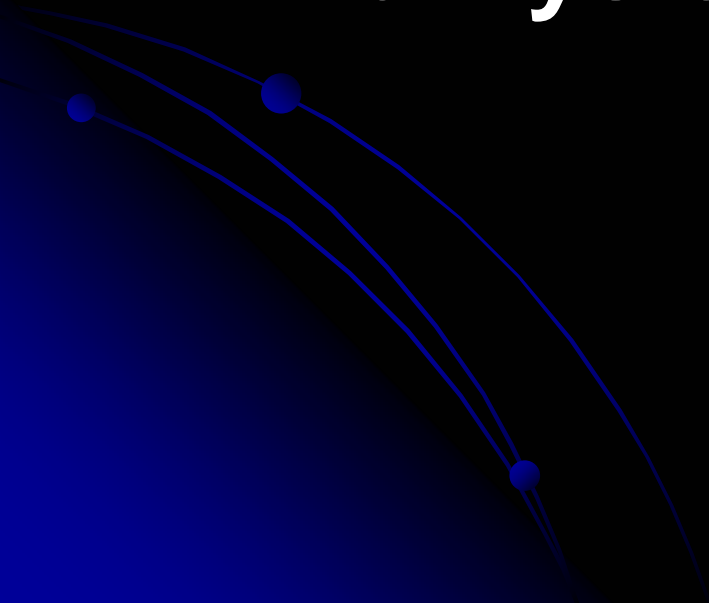
- They won't fix what it will not recognize
- They must be willing to lead and take part in honest discussions about education
- They must realize that cultures of blame do not produce success
- They must let the data speak and be guided by research
- They must invest in creating a culture of learning

“Lessons Learned About the Achievement Gap.” Rossi Ray-Taylor.
The School Administrator, January 2005

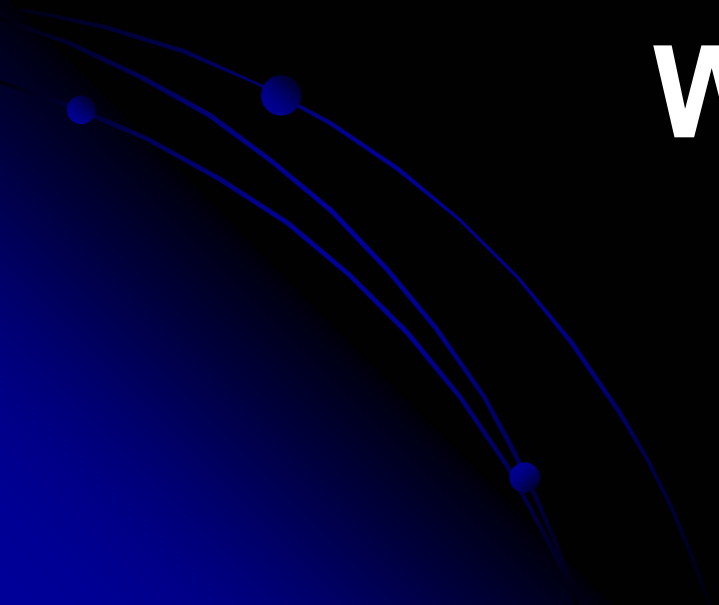
Final Thoughts...



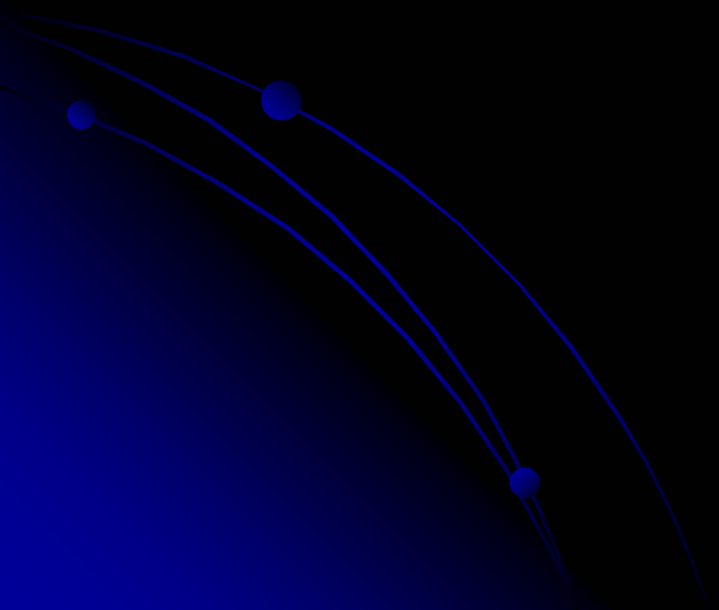
A Good School Can Overcome the Debilitating Effects of Poverty and a Dysfunctional Family



**All Children Can
and
Will Learn**



**Committed and Dedicated Teachers
and Administrators Can Make the
Difference in a Child's Life**



“The risk for our children in school is not a risk associated with their intelligence. Our failures have nothing to do with:

- I.Q.
- nothing to do with poverty
- nothing to do with race
- nothing to do with language
- nothing to do with style
- nothing to do with the need to discover new pedagogy
- nothing to do with the children's families...

We have only one problem: ***do we truly have the will to see each and every child in this nation develop to the peak of his or her capacities?”***

Closing the Achievement Gap...

"We could, of course, simply drag our heels and blame the underachievement problem on the kids or their families, as some of our colleagues do. But before you join that chorus, think about its devastating message: **to communities**, that schools really don't matter; **to teachers**, that they don't have to try; **to parents**, that their kids don't count. And the most devastating message of all, **to poor and minority students**, that you don't believe they can learn."

Closing the Achievement Gap

“How many effective schools would you have to see to be persuaded of the educability of all children?

If your answer is more than one, then I submit that you have reasons of your own for preferring to believe that basic pupil performance derives from family background instead of school response to family background...We can, whenever and wherever we choose, successfully teach all children whose schooling is of interest to us.”

HOW ARE WE DOING?

